

IN THE CLAIMS:

Please CANCEL claims 14, 22 and 23 without prejudice to or disclaimer of the recited subject matter.

Please AMEND claims 13, 21 and 24, and ADD new claim 27, as follows. For the Examiner's convenience, all claims currently pending in this application have been reproduced below:

1-12. (Canceled)

13. (Currently Amended) A supporting apparatus for supporting a weight of a member which mounts a movable stage to a base, said apparatus comprising:

a first permanent magnet arranged on one of the member and the base;

a second permanent magnet unit arranged ~~on the other of the member and the base on which said first permanent magnet is arranged, and arranged~~ so that said first permanent magnet is interposed[[,]]; and

a linear motor which is arranged between the member and the base, and provides a force which acts on the member,

wherein magnetized directions of said first permanent magnet and said second permanent magnet unit are perpendicular to a gravity direction of the member, and

wherein a width ~~size~~ of said second permanent magnet unit in a perpendicular direction to the magnetized directions and the gravity direction is different from a width ~~size~~ of said first permanent magnet.

14. (Canceled)

15. (Previously Presented) The apparatus according to claim 13, wherein said second permanent magnet unit is arranged on the base.

16. (Previously Presented) The apparatus according to claim 15, further comprising changing means for changing a region in which said first permanent magnet and said second permanent magnet unit face each other.

17. (Previously Presented) The apparatus according to claim 16, wherein said changing means moves a plurality of magnets which constitute said second permanent magnet unit in the perpendicular direction to the magnetized directions and the gravity direction.

18. (Previously Presented) The apparatus according to claim 13, wherein said first permanent magnet and said second permanent magnet unit are arranged so that a spring constant becomes substantially zero in the perpendicular direction to the magnetized directions and the gravity direction.

19. (Previously Presented) An exposure apparatus for exposing a pattern onto a substrate mounted on a stage, said apparatus comprising:

a supporting apparatus, as defined in claim 13, for supporting a member mounted on the stage.

20. (Previously Presented) A device manufacturing method comprising:

a step of exposing a pattern onto a substrate by using an exposure apparatus defined in claim 19; and

a step of developing the substrate.

21. (Currently Amended) A supporting apparatus for supporting a weight of a member which mounts a movable stage to a base in a first direction, said supporting apparatus comprising:

a first permanent magnet arranged on the member, and magnetized in a first direction perpendicular to a gravity direction;

a second permanent magnet unit arranged on the base, and arranged so that said first permanent magnet is interposed; and

moving driving means for moving a plurality of magnets which constitute said second permanent magnet unit driving said second permanent magnet unit in order to change a facing area of said first and second permanent magnets in a second direction perpendicular to the first direction and the gravity direction.

22. (Canceled)

23. (Canceled)

24. (Currently Amended) An exposure apparatus for exposing a pattern onto a substrate mounted on a stage, said apparatus comprising:

a supporting apparatus, as defined in claim 21, for supporting a member mounted ~~to~~ on the stage.

25. (Previously Presented) A device manufacturing method comprising:

a step of exposing a pattern onto a substrate by using an exposure apparatus as defined in claim 24; and

a step of developing the substrate.

26. (Previously Presented) The apparatus according to claim 13, wherein the width of said second permanent magnet in the direction perpendicular to the gravity direction and the magnetized directions is larger than the width of said first permanent magnet.

27. (New) The apparatus according to claim 21, wherein said driving means is controlled based on information related to a position of the movable stage.